DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 397 479 EA 027 714

AUTHOR Coleman, M.; And Others
TITLE Re-Thinking Training for Principals: The Role of Mentoring.
PUB DATE Apr 96
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, April 8-12, 1996).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Responsibility; Administrator Role; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Inservice Education; *Interprofessional Relationship; *Leadership Training; *Mentors; Orientation; *Principals; *Professional Development
IDENTIFIERS *Beginning Principals; Singapore; United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

The mentoring of new principals by experienced principals is generally accepted as an important aspect of the transition to the position. Different countries may stress different aspects of mentoring and conduct training at different stages of the preparation process. In the United States and Singapore, mentoring occurs as part of the administrator-training process, and in the United Kingdom it takes place as inservice education after the new principal has achieved the position. This paper compares the differences between the models of mentoring found in the United Kingdom and Singapore. Data were derived from a questionnaire sent to a total of 76 primary and secondary principals in Singapore and to a total of 70 principals in England. All had served as mentors to new principals. The overall response rates were 61 and 71 percent, respectively. Findings indicate that principals' perceptions of the mentoring process differed substantially. The concept of coaching is appropriate to a system in which the mentor observes and grades the aspiring principal. The attachment of mentors to proteges for 8-week periods in Singapore gives the mentor the opportunity to observe growth in skills. Singapore proteges benefit from the stress on learning, while the new English principal is more likely to place a high value on the support obtained from a trusted peer. Some mentors in Singapore reported that they experienced strain from having to evaluate their proteges but described the relationship as more developmental in nature than did the English mentors. Four tables and a copy of the questionnaire are included. (Contains 13 references.) (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 397 479

RE-THINKING TRAINING FOR PRINCIPALS: THE ROLE OF MENTORING

Coleman, M., Low, G.T. , Bush, T. and Chew, O. A. J.
University of Leicester, United Kingdom
National Institute of Education, Singapore

Paper presented at the AERA Conference, New York, 8 - 12 April 1996

Introduction

Mentoring of new principals by those already established in the role, is generally accepted as an important aspect of the transition to principalship. The concept of mentoring is very similar in different national contexts (Bush, 1995). However, programmes of mentoring developed within the educational and professional traditions of different countries may stress different aspects of mentoring, and may take place at different stages of the training process. Bush (1995) identifies the "pre-service model" found in Singapore and the USA, and the "in-service model" that has been developed in the UK. Mentoring in the USA and Singapore is seen as an element of the training process, whilst in the UK mentoring takes place after the new principal is in post, and has generally been regarded as "a substitute for training rather than forming part of it" (Bush, 1995, p.3). Comparative data illustrating the differences between the models of mentoring found in the UK and Singapore provides an opportunity to reflect on the training of new principals in both countries. The decision to initiate new forms of training for UK principals, makes such reflection particularly relevant.

Mentoring in Singapore

Since 1984, the then Institute of Education has conducted the Diploma in Educational Administration (DEA) programme for the education of future school principals. There are two full-time DEA programmes for vice principals considered suitable for principalship. One programme for primary and one for secondary. In each of these programmes there is a compulsory 310 hours of coursework, and in addition there is an eight-week practicum for all participants. The participants are attached to their mentoring principals for four weeks in each of the two academic semesters.

The participant works full-time with the mentor in the latter's school for these eight weeks. The mentor's objective is to provide an effective role model for the participant, helping the protégé practice and gain experience in the use of skills relevant to the "real-life" principal's job. The mentor helps the protégé learn the behaviour expected of a principal. Towards the end of the practicum period, each participant assumes responsibility for the mentor's school, managing the organisation for almost a week. Mentors are carefully selected by the Ministry of Education as worthy role models for future school principals. Within the context of the formal programme at the National Institute of Education, mentoring is viewed as a learning relationship, with the mentor and the participant (or protégé) working together on the job, learning how to achieve excellence in principalship.

Mentoring in England and Wales

The need for both mentoring and training had been recognised by the School Management Task Force (SMTF):

EA027714

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
M Coleman
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

> "the headteacher plays a highly significant role in school management, being both focus and pivot at the centre of decision-making. Preparing, inducting and developing headteachers is a major responsibility of the education service." (SMTF 1990, p.3)

The recommendations of the SMTF led to mentoring schemes for new headteachers which began to operate in the early 1990s in twelve regions. National funding was provided for training for mentors and their mentees, and to allow release time for the mentoring to take place. Mentoring has largely taken the form of one to one meetings between the mentor and the mentee over the period of a year.

It is only since April 1995 that new headteachers (principals) have been entitled to training in the form of the Headteachers' Leadership and Management Programme (Headlamp). The programme allows headteachers to choose a programme of training for leadership and management following an initial needs analysis. Mentoring may or may not form part of the programme of training.

Despite the differences in the British and Singaporean systems, the shared research interest of the authors in the role of mentoring in the training of principals has led to the development of a common questionnaire (see Appendix 1) that has been used in a parallel survey of mentors in England and in Singapore to facilitate comparative analysis of questions relating to the mentoring of new principals.

The Questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed for use with mentors in both Singapore and the East Midlands of England. The development phase included piloting by both the Singapore and Leicester teams, and this involved 13 respondents from Singapore and 9 from the UK. Questions were included on the personal and professional characteristics of the mentor, the nature and development of the relationship between the mentor and protégé, the perceived benefits of the relationship for both parties, and for the educational system, understanding of the concept of mentoring and the problems that might be associated with mentoring.

The questionnaire was modified slightly following the pilot study. In Singapore questionnaires were sent to 43 primary principals and 33 secondary principals, with an overall response rate of 60.5%. The primary principals returned 27 questionnaires and the secondary principals 19. In England, 70 questionnaires were dispatched to all heads who are, or had previously been, mentors, within three counties in the English East Midlands. The response rate was 71%, with 40 being returned from primary heads, seven from secondary principals and three from special schools. (see Table 1) The higher proportion of primary heads is consistent with the pattern of schools in England, where 80 percent of schools are primary.

Table 1
The mentors - phase of education, gender and age

	England Numbers of mentors	Singapore Numbers of mentors
Primary	40	27
Secondary	7	19
Special	3	0
	50	46
Male	24	15

Female	26	28
Not stated	0	3
	50	46
Age 36-40	2	0
Age 41-45	13	5
Age 46-50	20	13
Age 51-55	10	17
over 55	5	11

Professional characteristics of mentors

Mentoring of principals has been operating in Singapore since 1984, whilst the first formal mentoring of principals in England was in the academic year 1991-92. In Singapore, 16 principals had been mentoring for between four and nine years, whilst 30 had served as mentors for less than four years. Fourteen of the 46 had only one year's experience of mentoring.

In England the mentoring experience of respondents was understandably more recent; 46 of the 50 respondents were active mentors in 1994/95. About half (24) had been mentors in 1993/4 and 12 in 1992/3. Only one had been a mentor in 1991/2.

There was a similarity in the range and levels of experience of the English and Singaporean mentors. The English mentors are all very experienced teachers with at least 16 years in the profession. However, there was considerable diversity in their level of experience as principals. Five have been heads for less than six years while one had 26 years experience. Many mentors had held more than one headship and 21 had been principals of their present schools for less than six years. In Singapore, there is a similar range of experience amongst the mentors. Six had been principals for less than six years whilst one had been a principal for 24 years. As in England a large proportion (24) have been in their present school for less than six years.

The Singaporean mentors had learnt the skills of mentoring partly through the DEA guidelines, but also from their own experience:

> "as mentors started working with their first protégé, they gathered experiential knowledge and insight on how they could proceed for subsequent trainees." (Chew et al 1996, p.10)

The pilot scheme for British mentors had allowed funding for specific mentoring training which was arranged regionally.

Relationship with the Protégé

Respondents were asked to describe their relationship with their [present or most recent] protégé. This caused some difficulty because some were mentoring two new principals at the same time. Table 2 shows the responses to this question.

Table 2
How would you describe your relationship with your protégé?

	England	Singapore
	%	%
Professional	96	91

Trusting	78	96
Informal	78	72
Cordial	68	52
Developmental	54	83
Respectful	48	89
Collegial	40	63
Formal	36	26
Close	26	46
Invigorating	4	39
Distant	2	4
Uneasy	0	0
Strained	0	0
Others (relaxed)	52	0

The responses suggest that in both countries the mentor relationship is professional and dependent on mutual trust. However, the Singaporean mentors stress certain responses much more than their English equivalents. Trusting, developmental, respectful, collegial and close are all rated considerably higher, whilst "invigorating" as a concept is endorsed by 39% of Singaporean but only 4% of British mentors. Above all, the British mentors rate the relationship as "professional", but appear to stress its informal and relaxed nature. It may be relevant that previous qualitative research with pairs of mentors and mentees in England (Bush et al 1996) has indicated that mentees, whilst initially welcoming the supportive nature of the mentoring relationship, may subsequently want more challenge in the relationship.

Most of the English mentees (64%) and Singaporean respondents (74%) were conscious of a change in the relationship during the mentoring period. For the English respondents, this usually involved development and maturation, with the protégé, and perhaps also the mentor, becoming more relaxed with a subsequent growth of trust:

> "The mentee was perhaps rather defensive and anxious to impress initially but as our professional relationship developed this changed to an easier, more trusting and informal situation."

The Singaporean respondents also stressed the growth of trust and friendship:

> "Protégé was more forthcoming with ideas/suggestions and was also more open. We became good friends."

Friendship between mentor and protégé was also a feature of the relationship identified within the Singaporean context by Chong et al (1989) and reported by Walker and Stott (1992).

Pre-Mentoring Meetings

In Singapore, two kinds of Pre-Mentoring Meetings are built into the DEA programme. The first consists of a number of orientation visits undertaken by the DEA participant to the mentor's school. Protégés have to arrange the visit and this enables them to interact with their mentors.

The second form of organized activity consists of the three half day pre-attachment seminars. During these days, mentors organise themselves into groups and take turns

to share their expertise. The focus is on teaching the protégés skills which they will need when they are on attachment, eg interpersonal and conflict management skills. The most commonly organized activity for the orientation visits is that of introducing the protégé to meeting the key personnel in the school and other responses focused on activities related to familiarisation and briefing about the school. Most mentors found these pre-mentoring meetings helpful in initiating the mentor-protégé relationship. Only 16% responded that these meetings (orientation visits) were not helpful.

Orientation visits are not relevant to the post-appointment mentoring of the English respondents. Just over half (56%) of the mentors had met their protégés before the formal mentoring period. Most of these met only at the informal reception arranged by the Local Education Authority to launch that year's mentoring programme but a few already knew the new principal through professional networks.

The Qualities of Good Mentors

Mentors were asked to identify those qualities which they feel make them good mentors. Most of the English mentors (76%) identify listening, regarding it as an essential skill for successful mentoring. Our respondents also identified their growth of skills in associated areas, linking listening to effective communication skills, involving response, reflection and analysis as well as attentiveness:

> "The ability to listen and analyse situations";
>
> "Above all the ability to listen and observe. It is also important not to be judgmental".

Many (28%) of the English heads also stress the personal qualities required for effective mentoring.

> "Approachable and non-threatening in my dealings with people. I love to be of help";
>
> "A friendly manner to set people at ease".

An evaluation of the funded mentoring programme in England and Wales, (Bolam et al 1995) reached similar findings when they established that new headteachers ranked the six most important characteristics of mentors as:

1. listening skills;
2. open, warm and enthusiastic behaviour;
3. experience of headship;
4. providing feedback;
5. being non-judgmental;
6. counseling skills.

The Singapore mentors, operating with a different model of mentoring, did not place the same emphasis on listening skills. For the majority (66%) personality traits such as openness, sincerity and patience were what made them good mentors:

> "Very trusting and open. I give protégé almost free run of the school, access to files, interviews with staff and pupils ... Willingness to share and listen to mentee, to attach importance to their ideas; ability to establish rapport and build up confidence."

Fifty per cent of the respondents also refer to their ability and willingness to share as important qualities.

> "Willingness to share not only my strengths but also my weaknesses."

In a review of mentoring in Singapore, Chong et al (1989) concluded that the :

> "vital ingredient of any mentor/protégé relationship is for both parties to trust each other. The mentor must be willing and able to share all of himself or herself; the protégé should be open-minded and willing to learn" (p. 19)

Improvements in Protégé Skills

The mentors were asked whether they noticed any improvement in certain management skills. The responses are necessarily subjective but are important because they provide insights into the effectiveness of the mentoring process. If there is no skills development in protégés, mentoring may be of limited value as a training mode.

The Singapore respondents are much more likely to identify improvement in all skills since their mentoring programme is largely a skills based model. The mentors have considerable opportunities to observe their protégés in the orientation meetings and during their attachment. In the English experience, mentoring is not organised within the framework of a formal training programme, and is generally limited to one-to-one discussion when in post, and the main progress in skills is noted in respect of problem analysis, leadership and perception (see Table 3).

Table 3
Mentors noting improvement in the protégés' skills

	England	Singapore
	%	%
Problem analysis	60	87
Perceptual skills	44	74
Leadership	34	83
Human Relations skills	26	74
Organizational ability	22	85
Assertiveness	20	76
Team Building	18	74
Oral communication	4	59
Written communication	4	50

The Value of Mentoring as a Training Mode for New Heads

The nature of the mentoring experience in England and Singapore is obviously very different. The main value of the Singaporean pre-service model of mentoring appears to be that it gives protégés a feel of the real life of principalship:

> "They get first hand practical observation and tutored experience. They can reflect on their observations and build their own views based on their observations ... Makes text book and classroom lectures come alive."

The opportunity to learn from mentors was mentioned. One indicated:

> "...gives the opportunity for a vice-principal to take on tasks of principal without actual accountability and worry."

These findings replicate those of earlier studies in Singapore, where the value of the time spent with the mentor was summed up by one protégé:

> "I must say that those eight weeks were the single most important learning experience. ... The close relationship [with the mentor] and her frankness in sharing her thought and experiences, guided me and helped me to have valuable insights into the nature of my future role." (Ho and Chong, 1993, p.2)

In contrast, the new headteachers in England are faced with the reality of principalship without pre-service training. The English survey respondents were unanimous in regarding mentoring as a valuable and appropriate training mode for school heads:

> "Headship is a key role in an effective school, therefore training is very important ... The development of the individual into a particular role is a personal process. Perhaps mentoring is the most effective way of doing this."

Benefits for Protégés

Mentors were asked to comment on the benefits of mentoring for protégés. Differences in perception between the two sets of respondents may relate to the different nature of the mentoring process. The most commonly perceived benefit in England is the confidentiality of the process with the associated opportunity to discuss problems in a 'safe' situation. A related issue is the perceived 'non-threatening' and 'non-judgmental' nature of their mentoring process. There are no 'penalties' if mistakes or inadequacies are revealed. Twenty-six per cent of respondents referred to this issue:

> "The opportunity to discuss their own particular situation in a confidential environment";

> "It is virtually the only opportunity to deal with sensitive issues with full confidentiality and 'permission".

Several respondents emphasise that headship can be lonely because there may be issues that cannot be shared with deputies or governors. Mentoring provides a means of alleviating the stress that may arise, in part, from the isolation. A related issue is the benefit of being able to use the mentor as a 'sounding board' for their ideas and concerns. The experience of the mentor is harnessed to discuss situations which may be unfamiliar to the protégé:

> "I have been a sounding board. I think stress has been reduced. We have clarified issues and assessed solutions."

Underpinning the mentor process is the concept of support and this is identified specifically by some of the respondents:

> "The security of having a colleague who would be there to support professionally when needed."

Chong et al (1989) refer to mentoring as being a "learning relationship" (p.23). Most of the Singaporean mentors (83%) state that the greatest benefit for protégés is 'learning'. Protégés were able to pick up skills, knowledge and general management techniques and were exposed to a wider perspective of school management:

> "An insight into how different principals operate; removing blinkers about 'stereotype' principals; principalship can be used to liberate people to get the best out of them";
>
> "Learnt that there are different ways of doing things. To be assertive and direct".

Seven mentors mentioned that protégés had the opportunities to observe and to reflect on their observation:

> "He had the opportunity to observe how another person carries out the role of a principal, reflect on it and determine his own leadership style."

Benefits for Mentors

The benefits of mentoring apply to mentors as well as protégés. Most mentors (88% in England, and 96% in Singapore) mention the advantages they have gained from the process.

All the English mentors and all but three of the Singaporean respondents claim to enjoy the role. Most gain satisfaction from supporting a new colleague and from the contribution they are making to the development of the education service. For some UK mentors this may be linked to an increase in their own confidence through successful mentoring. The realisation that they have much to offer to new heads boosts their self-esteem and they take vicarious pride in the achievements of their protégés:

> "It offers me the satisfaction of helping a colleague's professional development and also prompts me to reflect on my headship role."

A few Singaporean mentors (20%) also referred to the satisfaction they gain in helping others in the education service.

> "It is enriching and satisfying to know that someone is learning from you."

The English mentors also value the relationship with the new head, regarding the encounters as an opportunity for mutual development. In previous research (Bush et al 1996) one head called mentoring "a two-way contract". Professional networks have weakened in the increasingly competitive climate and the mentor relationship provides a valuable opportunity for sharing problems and ideas:

> "Listening to another's frank discussions of heads' role and expectations actually helps to clarify and give perspective to my own role."

Twenty per cent of the Singaporean mentors referred to the issue of networking, an issue stressed by Daresh and Playko (1992), and to the fact that through the mentoring scheme they have gained a friend.

> "I have made some life-long friends - not only for the school attachment period but for life."

Learning from the Mentee

Respondents in both countries are impressed by the enthusiasm and determination of the new heads. Two of the UK mentors commented:

> "What courage new heads have. Both [protégés] had the most awful legacies and yet faced difficulties with humour and dignity. Their stamina amazed me";
>
> "It reminded me how enthusiastic and idealistic I was all those years ago. The sort of reminder that would do all new heads good - a kick start!".

Singapore mentors who spent a lot of time interacting with their mentees felt that they learned a great deal: "usually you won't learn so much from your fellow principals." As in the UK, mentors were equally impressed by the mentee's eagerness and enthusiasm. "I get infected by their enthusiasm."

Learning from the Mentoring Experience

Chong et al (1989) reported the benefit gained through mentoring as being one of mutual learning: "Every encounter with the protégé is a learning experience". In reviewing the experience of mentoring new headteachers in the East Anglian region of England, Southworth (1995) identifies the major benefits to mentors as being the fostering of reflective leadership; the implicit recognition of the benefits of life-long learning and the resulting benefits to all members of the school. The mentoring process has prompted several English respondents to review their practice. Alternative insights have encouraged reflection and evaluation of well-established structures and processes, leading to beneficial change in some schools:

> "A new insight into the job and a refreshing shake-up of some of my own assumptions. One of the most worthwhile things I have done and a very worthwhile piece of professional development";
>
> "It made me think very hard about my own school and my own practice".

Like the mentors in the UK, most of the Singaporean respondents (59%) found that they were given opportunities for professional development through the mentoring process:

> "Provides a necessary, worthwhile and professional diversion from school life. Intrinsically satisfying. There is the occasional new idea(s) that surfaces and invites trying out. The outcome is usually more than the sum total of the two parts."

Many mentors in Singapore also mentioned the benefit of learning and reflection:

> "I also learnt as I was forced to reflect on my thinking and actions in carrying out my duty as a principal in my sharing with the participant. These reflections have enabled me to fine-tune and perform my tasks at a higher level."

In Singapore, 50% of the respondents claimed that, as a result of the mentoring experience, they know more about themselves. One became:

"More aware of my style of working and management; modified some of my managerial skills."

In several cases, mentoring has also prompted the enhancement of specific management skills, notably the listening, counseling and other inter-personal skills already identified by the English mentors as the most important qualities of mentors. In the East Midlands, the specific change most frequently cited (by 24% of mentors) was the enhancement of communication and listening skills:

"The importance of my approach and attitude towards colleagues in the position of a new head. The development of communication skills; I wasn't aware of how crucial this would be and how important tact and understanding would be."

Improvement in listening skills was also identified as a benefit by some of the Singapore mentors:

"I learnt that a new principal taking over the running of a school has many apprehensions. I learnt to listen more carefully."

A few respondents also mention that they now recognised that there may be several successful management styles. This pluralism arose from extended contact with protégés who appeared to be effective while adopting a different approach from that favoured by the mentor:

"How another head sees an issue and sets about handling it. A reminder that there are other styles of management."

For those who had more than one protégé, they learnt that they had to relate and coach differently:

" As mentor, [you] cannot 'parrot' what was done with one mentee to the next as they come with different experience and exposure as vice-principal."

Kirkham, (1993) refers to the "regeneration" of mentors through their role and the broad nature of some of the benefits experienced by mentors seems likely to affect the school as a whole and those who come into contact with it:

"The whole experience seemed to make me a better principal: I was more patient with my staff and more careful in my dealings with them, pupils and parents."

Benefits for the Educational System

The mentors were asked to identify benefits for the educational system in contrast to those which accrue to the mentors and their protégés. This is an important issue because the costs of the mentoring programme are borne by central or local government in anticipation of benefits for the system.

Most (86%) of the UK heads responded to this question but 22% simply reiterated the benefits for the participants rather than taking a wider view. Many of the others focus on the importance of mentoring, as a mode of training and support, in improving the system. Mentoring serves to reinforce or 'cascade' good practice:

"Headteachers need training - it cannot be assumed that good classroom managers will become good school managers. If headteachers are, as it's suggested, an important factor in effective schools, then training and support will improve the system as long as it's done properly."

A few respondents linked the effective induction of new heads to the notion of systemic improvement, presumably through a long-term process of accretion: 'better head, better service'. Others suggest that the support for principals benefits the system by increasing their confidence and reducing the stress they experience in a demanding and often lonely job:

"More confident headteachers who are able to provide strong leadership";

"A headteacher who is being supported in a caring professional way will come back to the task refreshed and more able to function properly".

A few more cynical mentors refer to mentoring as a cheap mode of support and training, providing benefits to the system by virtue of its economy:

"Strong, effective and free advice."

In Singapore, the established nature of compulsory mentoring may ensure wide benefits. Chong et al (1989) identify the importance of mentoring to the continuation of existing norms and culture, the growth of knowledge and skills and the improved performance of the newly trained principals.

Most (72%) of Singapore mentors note that the system benefits by having more effective future principals.

"It has produced quality principals who in turn have turned our education system into an effective and highly respected one";

"Provides a basis for training and 'certifying' the ability of principals in our school system."

The Concept of Mentoring

The mentors were asked to evaluate the appropriateness of several terms used in the literature to conceptualise mentoring. The respondents are more comfortable with those descriptors that suggest a two-way relationship rather than a one-way transmission of expertise. Most in England regard 'peer support' as 'very appropriate', confirming the findings of earlier research (Bush et al 1996). There is considerable support for 'mutual learning' and 'collaboration' in both countries.

Almost all mentors in England reject the 'expert-novice' conception and there is only mild support for this notion in Singapore. There is little support for systemic motives such as career sponsorship and executive succession in either country. There is a mixed response to the concept of coaching, which is understandably seen as more appropriate to the Singapore system of attachment to a mentor, than to the British system of post-appointment consultation. The notion of socialisation receives some support in both countries, although it is considered inappropriate by more than half the respondents. Surprisingly, there are mixed views about 'altruism'. In practice, mentoring is altruistic because mentors are not paid for the work. However, they may

feel that the mutuality of the process generates benefits as well as costs in terms of their time (See Table 4).

Table 4
The Concept of Mentoring

	Very appropriate		Appropriate		Inappropriate		Very Inappropriate	
	E %	S %	E %	S %	E %	S %	E %	S %
Peer Support	70	37	24	54	0	9	0	0
Mutual/reciprocal Learning	58	48	36	41	2	11	0	0
Collaboration	42	33	42	54	10	13	2	0
Co-Counselling	16	13	56	61	16	20	2	2
Altruism	4	4	38	26	32	35	12	17
Coaching	2	41	8	48	38	9	44	0
Socialisation	0	9	38	33	36	41	16	11
Expert/Novice	0	4	6	35	52	43	32	9
Career Sponsorship	0	9	20	39	46	22	14	4
Executive Succession	0	11	8	39	30	41	38	7

(E = England, S = Singapore)

The Problems of Mentoring

The most common problem identified in the literature of both Singapore (Walker et al, 1993) and England (Bush et al 1996) is the difficulty of finding sufficient time to be an effective mentor. However, this issue was raised by only 12% of the East Midlands respondents:

> "Finding the time in what is already a very demanding job."

English respondents identify several other significant difficulties. For example, 26% of the mentors refer to the difficulties they experience in 'listening' rather than offering solutions to issues raised by protégés. This concern was expressed in earlier research in the Midlands (Bush et al 1996, Bush and Coleman, 1995) and may be a particular feature of mentors in the East Midlands who have been trained to eschew a problem-solving approach and to allow the protégé to 'find' their own headship role:

> "To be non-judgmental. Resisting quick fixes";

"Listening but not responding with direct answers of 'I would do it this way' but rather discussing the problem so that my colleague can form their own opinion and decide for themselves."

Twenty two per cent of mentors refer to the problems of establishing the relationship in the early stages of the process. There is concern about the first contact and about how to develop the link:

"The very first meeting; there seemed so many ways of getting the relationship wrong";

"Concern over ground rules - where to meet, do we meet in a school? Would there be enough to talk about! Needless to say most of these concerns resolved themselves easily and are not issues at all now."

These comments indicate a surprising lack of confidence amongst experienced heads who had been trained as mentors. This sometimes extended beyond the early stages of the relationship:

"Being persuaded that one might be able to make a contribution to the process";

"Having confidence in myself that I may be able to 'draw out' the mentee."

Some of the concerns about support and training for mentors may be related to their uncertainties:

"There needs to be clarity of the role of the mentor, the process of mentoring and the expectations for the process."

Problems of mismatch between mentor and mentee, identified elsewhere (Bolam et al, 1995, Bush and Coleman, 1995, Bush et al 1996) were not mentioned by this group of principals.

Previous research in Singapore has identified only the potential disadvantage of time, and established no identifiable pattern of recognised problems (Walker et al, 1993). Some of the less experienced mentors in Singapore, identified problems specifically related to aspects of the Singapore programme. Mentors are involved in grading their mentees who are attached to them for eight weeks, whereas mentoring in Britain does not include any aspect of assessment.

The fact that they have to grade their mentees was mentioned as a problem by 17% of mentors in Singapore. These difficulties include problems in providing feedback and difficulties in grading as there is no benchmark:

"some indicators of performance by the protégé were not clearly spelt out so that it was not easy to assess her performance";

"allocation of grades because I have no previous examples to compare with".

There has been speculation about the possibility of the effectiveness of mentoring being adversely affected by the introduction of "summative evaluation criteria of protégé performance", (Walker and Stott, 1992, p. 8)

During the eight weeks of attachment the mentees shadow their mentors, and 4% of the mentors regard the loss of privacy as the most difficult aspect of mentoring.

Besides a loss of privacy, 11% of mentors found it taxing to be closely observed by someone else:

> "I became very self-conscious and had to be extra careful about how I went about doing my work";
>
> "It took me some time to adjust to having someone by my side and needing so much of my time. It was like finding yourself suddenly married and having to share, where before I just went full steam ahead."

Whilst 4% mentors did not respond, 11% claimed that they had no difficulty. The largest number (24%) were apprehensive about expectations of them:

> "I did not know what to expect and was fearful that I could not meet up to expectations both from my mentee and NIE."

Twenty per cent of Singaporean mentors questioned if they had sufficient knowledge and ability to carry out the work as mentors:

> "Overcoming my fears that I had little to offer that my protégé did not already know (I learnt my skills on the job - I had received no special training)."

In this they showed similarity with the group of heads in England who also exhibited a lack of confidence in their role.

Conclusion

The perception of the mentors in England and Singapore of the experience of the protégé does indicate differences between the systems of the two countries. However, the impression is gained that the mentors themselves are experiencing many of the same benefits and exhibiting some of the same concerns whether they are operating within the pre-service model of Singapore or the in-service British model. Despite the differences in the problems experienced by mentors there is a similarity in the doubt and self-questioning of some of the mentors in both countries.

Almost without exception, the mentors state that they enjoy what they are doing and that they find benefits for both their protégés and themselves. The mentors of both countries appreciate the opportunity for reflection on their own role and the stimulation and refreshment that they gain through the contact with an inexperienced principal, who brings fresh ideas.

The mentoring system in Singapore is well established, and a compulsory aspect of training for new principals. In England mentoring is relatively new, voluntary, and likely to change due to the new systems operating for the training of new headteachers through the Headlamp scheme, and the proposed National Professional Qualification for Headteachers (NPQH). The Singaporean experience of structured training for intending principals may indicate some appropriate guidelines in the development of new training modes. Chew et al (1996, p.11) comment on the "supportive structure" provided by the DEA programme within which mentors and protégés "work out their training relationship".

The existence of the pre-service model of mentoring in Singapore, and the in-service model in England, means that the perceptions of the mentoring process exhibit substantial differences. The concept of "coaching", which appears largely alien to the mentoring experience in England, is appropriate to a system where the mentor observes and grades the aspiring principal. The attachments of mentors to protégés for eight week periods in Singapore, gives the mentor opportunities to observe the growth in skills, about which the English mentor may do little more than speculate. Similarly the stress on learning as a benefit of mentoring is understandable in a pre-service model, whilst the new English principal is likely to place a high value on the support obtained from a trusted peer. The learning identified by mentors in Singapore may be underpinned by what is seen as a developmental relationship by most mentors and as "invigorating" by a substantial minority. The fact that the mentors are responsible for assessing their protégés may lead to some strain for Singaporean mentors, that is obviously not experienced by their English equivalents.

The professional and close relationship that is reported by the mentors of both countries provides a basis of comparison However, a major difference in the relationship of English mentors and their protégés and that of the Singapore pairings is indicated by the more developmental nature of the Singapore relationships. British mentors and their protégés might find benefit in the professional stimulus of a more challenging relationship, that goes beyond the largely supportive model that operates at present.

References

Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Pocklington, K. and Weindling, D. (1995) "Mentoring for new headteachers: recent British experience", in Journal of Educational Administration, vol. 33, No. 5.

Bush, T. (1995) "Mentoring for Principals: Pre-Service and In-Service Models", in Singapore Journal of Education, vol. 15, no. 1.

Bush, T. and Coleman, M. (1995) "Professional development for heads: the role of mentoring", in Journal of Educational Administration, vol. 33, No. 5.

Bush, T., Coleman, M., Wall, D. and West-Burnham, J. (1996) "Mentoring and Continuing Professional Development", in McIntyre, D. and Hagger, H., (eds) Mentors in Schools: Developing the Profession of Teaching London, David Fulton.

Chew, O.A.J., Low, G.T. and Dixit, N. (1996) "Principals' Mentoring Skills and Strategies: A Singapore Perspective" Paper presented at 5th BEMAS Research Conference held at Cambridge, 25-27 March 1996.

Chong K.C., Low, G.T. and Walker, A. (1989) Mentoring: A Singapore Contribution. Singapore Educational Administration Society.

Daresh, J. C. (1995) "Research base on mentoring for educational leaders: what do we know?", in Journal of Educational Administration, vol. 33, No. 5.

Daresh J.C. and Playko, M.A. (1992) Mentoring for Headteachers: A Review of Major Issues, School Organisation, 12, (2) pp. 145-152.

Ho, W.K. and Chong, K.C. (1993) Mentoring in Management Education: the NIE model, NIE News. Vol 10, October.

Kirkham, G. (1993) Mentoring and Headteachers, in Smith, P. and West-Burnham, J. (Eds) Mentoring in the effective School, Harlow, Longman.

Southworth, G. (1995) "Reflections on mentoring for new school leaders", in Journal of Educational Administration, vol. 33, No. 5.

Walker, A. and Stott, K. (1992) "Principalship Mentoring in Singapore: Preparation for Quality Headship", in Management in Education vol. 6. No. 3.

Walker, A., Chong, K.C. and Low, G.T. (1993) Principalship Training through Mentoring: The Singapore Experience, Journal of Educational Administration, vol. 31, No.4.

Appendix 1

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, SINGAPORE
AND
UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER, UNITED KINGDOM

MENTORING FOR PRINCIPALS

PART ONE

(Please circle your response)

1. **Sex**: Male Female

2. **Age**: Under 35 36-40 41-45
   46-50 51-55 Over 55

3. **In what years were you a mentor**: 1992-93 1993-94
   1994-95

4. **Level/phase of mentor**: Primary Secondary

5. **Sex of most recent protege/mentee**: Male Female

6. **Level phase of protege/mentee:** Primary Secondary

[Questions 7 - 9 all refer to the mentor]

7. **Number of years teaching experience**:

8. **Number of years experience as a school principal:**

9. **Number of years as principal in your present school** :

PART TWO

(Please answer the following questions with reference to your present or most recent protege/mentee)

10. **How would you describe your relationship with your protege?** (Please circle as many as are applicable and, if possible provide examples).

Close .....

Trusting ..... **Professional** ..... **Distant** .....
Collegial ..... **Cordial** ..... **Respectful** .....
Uneasy ..... **Strained** ..... **Developmental**.....
Invigorating ..... **Informal**..... **Formal** .....
Others (please state) .....

11. **Did your relationship with your protege change in any way as the period of attachment progressed?**

Yes No

If yes, please elaborate on the change ....

12. **Were there any problems in establishing the relationship?**

Yes No

If yes, how did you solve these problems?

13. **Did you meet your mentee before the mentoring period?**

Yes No

If yes, please explain the nature and purpose of the meeting(s)?

14. **Do you consider mentoring a valuable and worthwhile training mode for school heads?**

Yes No

If yes, please give your reasons

If no, please give your reasons

15. **Do you enjoy being a mentor?** Yes No

If yes, please give your reasons

If no, please give your reasons

16. **What qualities do you feel you have that make you a good mentor?**

17. **During your relationship with your protege/mentee have you noticed any discernible improvement by the protege/mentee in the following skills areas?**
[Please tick as appropriate.]

Team Building	Problem analysis	Judgement
Organizational ability	Decisiveness	Leadership
Sensitivity	Stress tolerance	Perception
Oral communication	Written communication	Assertiveness
Human relations skills	Others (please list and describe	

18. **What benefits do you believe your protege/mentee gained from the mentor-protege relationship/experiences with you?**

19. **What benefits did you derive from the mentor/protege relationship/experiences?**

20. **What did you learn from the mentoring experience?**

21. **In your opinion, what benefits did the educational system derive from the mentoring programme?**

22. **What did you learn from your mentee?**

PART THREE

23. **The following terms are often used to describe mentoring. To what extent do you regard them as appropriate terms? Please tick (√) for every term.**

Very Appropriate	Appropriate	Inappropriate	Very Inappropriate	
Expert/Novice				
Peer Support				
Co-counselling				
Coaching				
Socialisation				
Mutual/Reciprocal				
Learning				
Collaboration				
Career Sponsorship				
Executive Succession				
Altruism		20		

24. **What did you find were the most difficult aspects in becoming a mentor for the first time?**

25. **Do you have any other comments about your "first time" experience as a mentor?**

26. **Have you been a headteacher mentee?**

Yes No

If yes, was this experience beneficial in your subsequent role as a mentor?

Yes No

Please elaborate